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APRIL NO. 77















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IN THIS



HOPALONG

BURIED TROUBLE



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TOM MIX BLACKMAIL!

PLUS: YOUNG FALCON and YOUR AVORITE WESTERN FUNNY-BONE TICKLERS





















































WESTERN HERO















heels, the Johnston brothers turned to fight!













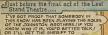












KNOW WHO IT IS, YOU'D BETTER TALK!

OR I'LL GET THE SHERIFF TO

ARREST EVERY ONE OF YOU!























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OUTLAW VALLEY

A RED ROAN Story

By Dick Kraus

THE VALLEY was narrow and green, hidden deep in the El Santo mountain range. High, sheer-faced cliffs ringed it, screening its one tiny entrance. Cleverly camouflaged by nature, the valley was an ideal hide-out for a band of wild horses-or for a man wanted by the law.

At the moment, it was serving as a refuge for both!

Half-hidden by the foliage of a scrub oak, Red Roan stood restlessly.

Behind the great red stallion, his herd grazed peacefully, long tails whisking away files in the drowsy sunlight. Scattered through the herd, fuzzy-coated colts nuzzled close to the protective sides of the mares.

It was—or should have been—a pasceful escene. But Red Roan was troubled. His scene. But Red Roan was troubled. His keen dark eyes watched alertly, intent on a spot in the valley several hundred yards away. There he saw the thin trickle of a campfire's smoke, and the figure of a single man crouched over the fire. The man had ridden into the valley the day before, galloping at great speed. Once inside, he had picketed his horse and made camp. Constantly, he had kept his rifle close by his side. And, at every moment, his eyes ranged the walls of the valley, searching, searching.

It was this that troubled Red Roan.

For months, his herd had lived undistunbed in the quite green valley. Now this intruder had come. The intelligent stallion sensed that he was uneasy, that he was being pursued! Would other men follow the single stranger into the valley? Would the safety of the wild herd be endangered? Red Roan could only wait and see!

But he did not have to wait long. A long-legged colt, feeling the first stirrings of his growing adulthood, had strayed, away from the herd. Adventurously, sensitive nostrils exploring the breeze, he had trotted down the valley in the direction of the campfire. Red Roan spotted him, and raced into the open to head him off.

At once Clint Sperry, sitting by the fire, rose to a half-crouched position. Gunstock slammed hard against his shoulder, and he squeezed the trigger.

Shots rang out sharply in the little valley. Then the outlaw leaned forward and

relaxed—at case again.
"Take it easy, Clint!" he muttered to
himself. "Just a pair of wild hosses! An'

himself. "Just a pair of wild hosses! An'
you thought it was a posse comin' after
yuh! Don't git jittery . ."

He settled back by the fire. His sinewy

hand explored the smooth barrel of the rifle, and his eyes ranged over the walls of the valley. Nothing in sight.

Out on the range, Red Roan bent over the prostrate form of the half-grown colt. Whinnying softly, his moist dark nose explored the young horse's body. Again he whinnied. But it was useless. The colt was dead, slain by the outlaw's bullet. It had ripped through the thin bone of the colt's head, killing him instantly. And across Red Roan's withers a second bullet had blazed, estaring a deep, angry furrow?

What the great horse feared had come to pass. This intrader had brought with him danger—and death! He had killed one of Red Roan's charges. He had to be punished and his menace had to be removed... in some way! Slowly, Red Roan began to the her bear to be removed... The he broke into a gallop, heading for the narrow entrance of the valley. He was leaving the herd for a time, leaving it to do a job that had to be done!

MAYS LATER, on a mountainside of the Santo range, the roan broncho found what ne was searching for.

There, far below him, was a party of riders. They were walking their horses slowly, spread out wide. Each man's eyes were intent on the forest and underbrush ahead, and a carbine lay ready against each saddle horn. On the chests of several of the men, silver stars gleamed.

Red Roan inclined his long head, dark

eyes serious.

Then, slowly, he began to approach the riders. His right forefoot clanked against a piece of shale that rolled a few yards. The rattle echoed down the mountainside, and several of the riders reined in their mounts and looked up at him.

"Just a wild horse," one of them called to the others. "But what a beauty! If we weren't out after Clint Sperry, I'd go after

that red boy!"

"Look how close he's coming!" another man murmured.

LOWLY, Red Roan was approaching

them, coming down the steep hillside seemingly without fear. Closer and closer he came, closer than he had ever before willingly come to any man. Suddenly one of the men grunted with

Sufddenly one of the men grunted with

"Look at that wound across his withers!" he cried. "If that isn't a rile graze, I'll be hogtied!" Then he paused, as several of the other riders wheeled back toward him. "But how did he get a rifle wound like that . . in these hills? We're the only riders up here."

riders up here."
"Except for Clint Sperry!" one of the other men broke in. "And that ornery killer's the only critter mean enough to shoot a wild horse like that. I'll bet he's the one

did it."

The first rider clenched his fist.

"Bob, I'll bet yo're right!" he exclaimed.
"Do yuh think if we followed the stallion, he might bring us closer to Sperry?" He hesitated. "I's a long shot I know, but we haven't been seeing any signs of the outlaw anyway. Net's risk it!"

As the riders reined their mounts toward him, Red Roan slowly turned away.

But he did not gallop. Instead he trotted at an even pace, over the shale, through the underbrush, over the mountainside toward the green valley, where his herd . . . and the outlaw who had killed one of his colts . . . waited.

Behind him the posse followed. They did not know what they would find, but they were willing to take a chance.

BACK IN THE little valley, Clint Sperry gradually became more confident. He slept more soundly at night, and his hand was not constantly on the trigger of his rifle. He thought of the past months, and his thin lips twisted into a smile. "That bank clerk in Brazos an' the sheriff in Brill City deserved what they got," he mused. "Let any others come after me, an' they'll get just what those wild hosses did a couple of days are!"

Then he relaxed and smiled again.
"But they'll never find me here," he muttered. "I'm holin' up here till fall, and then

I'll strike for California!"

So he dreamed through the hours. It was late in the afternoon, a few days later, that the outlaw heard the soft shuffle of distant hoofs. This time he did not even rise from the fire. "Those wild hosse again," he muttered to himself. "I'm not

wastin' bullets this time!"

His eyes half-loosed. Minutes later, when he heard the creaking of saddles and men's voices, half-stilled by the breeze, he sprang to his feet. But it was too late! The posse, led uneringly to the valley by Red Roan, had spotted the campfirey and were riding toward it in a spread-out fan! Even now, they spied him. Shouting triumphantly, they surged toward him at full gallop.

Desperately, the outlaw clutched his rifle, aimed it at the first of the riders and

fired!

But his aim was faulty and he missed. Before he could fire again, a hail of bullets stormed through the air, smashing him to a the ground. He twisted hard as he hit the soil, and opened sightless eyes to the sky. The posse's job was done.

AR above the scene, Red Roan stood in a thicket.

Behind him, his herd grazed peacefully. On the valley floor below, the lawmen had wrapped the slain body of the outlaw in a canva's poncho, and were riding out slowly. As they passed through the narrow valley entrance, one of them raised his sombero in a silent salue to the bir red horse.

Red Roan inclined his head, then began to crop grass himself. His job was done, too.

THE END

RED ROAN will lead you on the adventure trail in every issue of WEST-ERN HERO!

















STEPN HERO







ATTABOY.

HOPE I KIN

HEE! HEE!

GRRR!

GOLLY! GABBY



































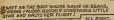




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FOR MORE MILEAGE





YOUNG FALCON HOW CAN I HELP YOU, LITTLE STAR, IF YOU DO NOT TELL ME WHAT FEAR IS HAUNTING YOU? (SOB)-I WILL MHY DID YOU RUN WHEN MENTIONED VISITING TELL YOU. THAT CAMP?

CAMP IS THE CAM OF MY TRIBE, BUT I HAVE BEEN BANISHED FOREVER FOR STEALING FROM THE TRIBE, I WILL TELL YOU THE WHOLE



THE NEXT DAY, TWO LARGE FUR-PELT BUNDLE WERE STOLEN FROM THE STOREHOUSE TEPEE WHERE THEY WERE STORED BY THE HUNTERS

OF OUR TRIBE ONE AMONG US IS A THIEF WHO PLACES PERSONAL GAIN OVER THE GOOD OF THE TRIBE! HE SHALL BE FOUND AND TWO OF THE PELT BUNDLE BANISHED FOREVER! HAVE BEEN



ONE DAY IN THE WOODS, I FOUND A SUITCAS OF WHITE GIRL'S FANCY CLOTHES DROPPED PERHAPS FROM A STAGECOACH! I TOOK IT BACK TO MY TENT

TATHE TRIBE

"SO, WHEN THE SUITCASE OF PRETTY THINGS WAS FOUND IN MY TEPEE, ALL BELIEVED THAT IT WAS I WHO STOLE THE TWO BUNDLES OF PELTS AND TRADED THEM FOR THE FANGY CLOTHES!

YOUR TEPEE IS CLOSE TO THE STOREDUSE TEPEE, LITTLE STAR.
WHILE THE TRIBE SLEPT YOU
STOLE THE BUNDLES OF PELTS...
IS THAT RIGHT? BELIEVE ME, O, CHIEF! I FOUND THIS





BUT NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE ME, SO I WAS BANISHED FROM ME, SO I WA DISGRACEFUL CHILD! YOU ARE NO LONGER PART OF

COME, LITTLE STAR! I CAN PROVE TO FALCON! NO! YOUR CHIEF THAT YOU WE INNOCENT, WE WILL DO IT



KNOW WHAT THOSE PELT BUNDLES ARE LIKE, LITTLE RESTORE YOU TO YOUR PEOPLE !









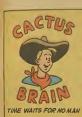
IT COULD BE







YOUNG FALCON BE ABLE TO UNCOVER THE REAL THIEF IN THE TRIBE? OR WILL THE BUILTY ONE DO AWAY WITH YOUNG











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